

Title:

Trapped On The Treadmill: Work-Life Balance

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623

Summary:

Work-life balance is a subject with broad points of view but Corporate America is finally responding to this demand. Actually it's been a matter of company survival. Corporations expecting employees to forego family time will not find the Ace Employee. Increased irritability means less production as more as more workers struggle to 'keep it all together'.

Keywords:

work-lifebalance,entrepreneurship,internetbiz

Article Body:

Workers suffering burnout are making mistakes. It's depressingly predictable: these mistakes cost money, compromise safety and may even put lives at risk. Work-life balance is a subject with broad points of view but Corporate America is finally responding to this demand. Actually it's been a matter of company survival. Corporations expecting employees to forego family time will not find the Ace Employee. Increased irritability means less production as more as more workers struggle to 'keep it all together'.

Smart companies are recognizing employee needs for work-life balance and are providing an environment that encourages that balance. Yet, limiting this to quick fixes like flexible working hours, or part time hours for working mothers is not dealing with the real reasons why people are feeling disillusioned with their working life. It has more to do with long hours, constant overtime, bullying bosses, and the continual cutbacks that keep many on a frayed tightrope.

The core problem lies inside the minds of management -- obsessive drives, insane greed for money and power, ambition gone awry and a foolish disregard of anything void of short-term results. Even with limited changes, management still treats underlings like a herd of cows milking every ounce of effort possible. That's not about to change when it's driven by a 'winner takes all' ideology and contempt for those unable to keep up.

In a 2006 study, men were more likely to report depression, increased drinking

and smoking, and suicidal thoughts. Women on the other hand were more likely to report anxiety, uncontrolled crying, migraines, sleeplessness and persistent petty ailments.

Patrick learned the hard way - at 40 he had risen to Senior Attorney for a small insurance company. His all-consuming job of 80-100 hours each week leaves his wife complaining that he was never home, and even when he is, he's useless. His children are in bed when he finally calls it a day, and often he sleeps in his clothes on top of the covers to get a head start the following morning at 5am.

Patrick admits he is spread too thin but if he doesn't run at breakneck speed, everything will overtake him - as if he's on a treadmill with no controls. He is gaining weight catching junk food on the run and drinking more to "unwind" as he puts it. But a long weekend with friends changed everything. Patrick was on the phone constantly and his wife felt more like she had joined their friends as a single. Vexed and defeated, she finally blurted out: "I'm done! I don't want to do this anymore".

Often a wakeup call follows a crisis. To save his marriage and family Patrick had to adopt a family-first policy. He laid his decision on the corporate table - no more weekends, home for dinner every night, no phone calls after 7pm! The silence was deafening.

Determined, he turned to the Internet and a new road to entrepreneurship. The dream of perfect harmony in work and home has worked for many who have chosen this road. Enjoyable, stress free and rewarding, they learned to love the risk factor because, as entrepreneurs they were able to see a direct benefit from the fruits of their own labor.

Entrepreneurs have a rosy view of their work-life balance because they love their boss. It's a big change from putting in 100 hours a week to please management by putting job first and everything else second, third or not at all. The new pioneers of this millennium will not be charging into the workplace as soon as they graduate. They will take their time and enjoy the trip. Ah well, the world doesn't need any more lawyers.

Congratulations Patrick, on getting fired.

2006 Esther Smith